FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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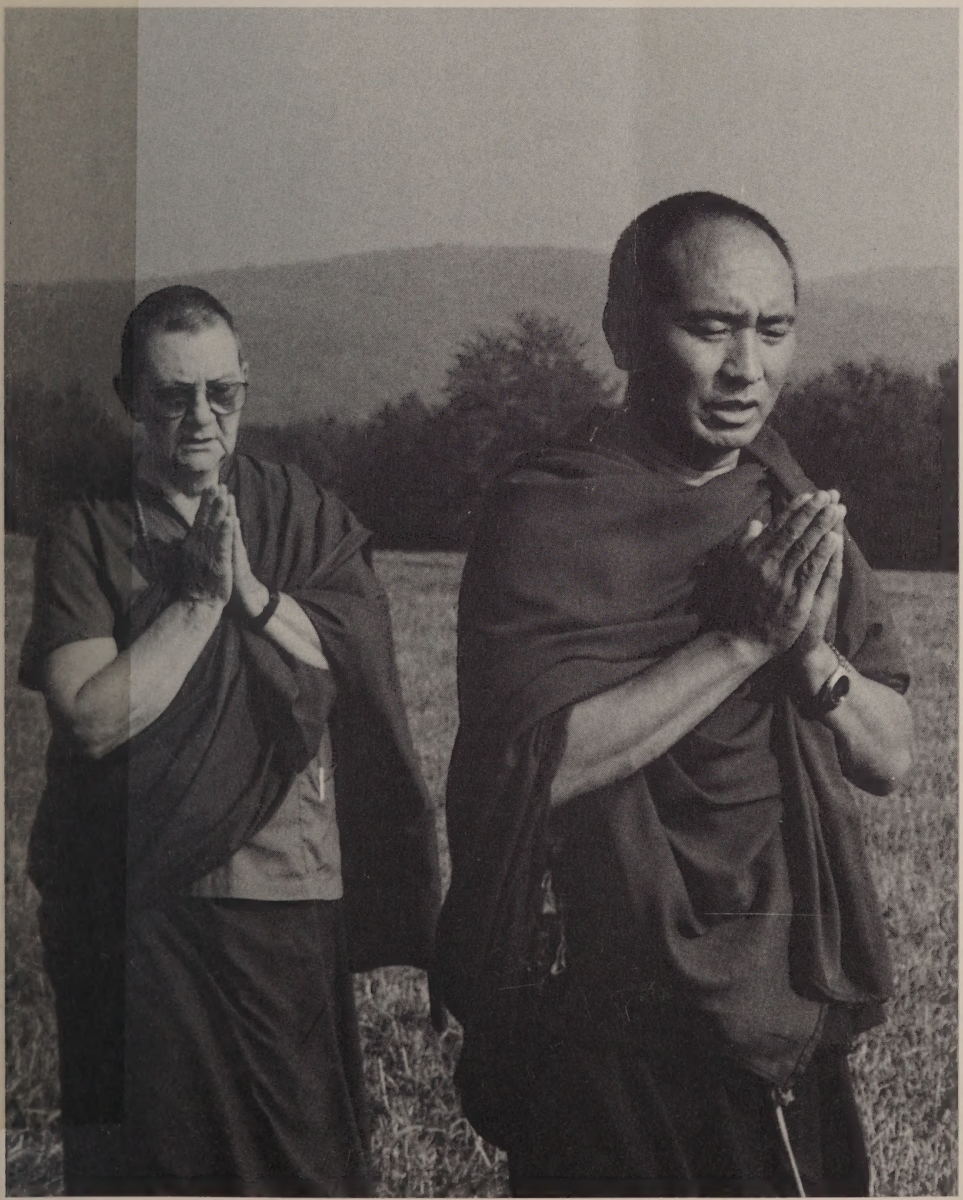

The purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

From the Articles of Incorporation, 1950.

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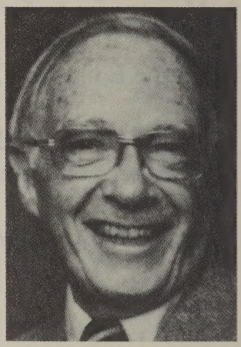
Cover photography by Ron Wagner: FIP trustee Ani Trime and Khenpo Tsewang lead retreatants at Padmasambhava Buddhist Center (see page 5).



With the celebration of Easter, the winter of our discontent starts to subside, and new life stirs and quickens in us; our bodies, our dreams, our visions, our fantasies, our hopes.

For Christians, Easter celebrates the miracle of Christ raised up from the dead to life eternal, with and in the Ultimate Reality we call God.

As spiritual beings our faith and hope are grounded in the promise that we, too, can be radically transformed and live a totally new and different life, unimaginable to us in our present state of ignorance and delusion.

We have heard the divine "Yes!" to life as we know it, and by nurturing our connection with the divine in every aspect of our lives, we believe we will be uplifted and enlivened at the moment of death and beyond.

For me, saying "Yes!" to life means not only to accept with joy and gratitude whatever comes my way, but also to generate loving kindness and compassion for all beings—for "all my relations" as Native Americans say, meaning not only all humans, but also every bird and tree and animal in the universe.

I came to this aspiration not through any virtue of my own, but through ignorance, selfishness, and a set of attitudes and behaviors that brought me close to death a number of times and caused great unhappiness to others, whose steadfast love and kindness have been out of all proportion to anything resembling my just desserts.

I learned invaluable lessons from those experiences. The most important truth I discovered was that freedom from constant dissatisfaction with who and what we are and have can be attained only by letting go of the ego-dominated desires, attachments and aversions that obscure our innate goodness and kindness and imprison us in labyrinths of fear and anger, jealousy, confusion and loneliness.

I learned, too, from spiritual guides, friends and teachers, ways of transforming those poisons, ways of channeling those energies into more joyous, life-affirming directions.

I can only think of my "transformation," if you will, as a gift of grace; an unmerited blessing that empowered me to let go of some of the need to try to control everything and everybody and say "Yes!" to life as it presents itself moment by moment—without wishing it to be different, or other than it is.

When you can do that, when you can accept yourself and everyone just as they are, without wishing to change them, You find yourself falling in love with life in all its forms and manifestations.

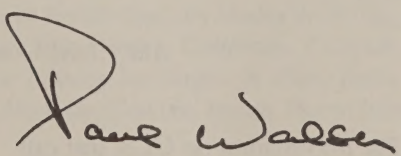
You say "Yes!" to love and poetry and music and the natural world and flowers and storms and intimacy and solitude and everything that is.

That "Yes!" can be shouted out with arms flung open to the sky, or whispered to yourself in the silence of a sweat lodge or synagogue. You can affirm the joy and wonder of life in all its diversity on your knees in a cathedral, in a store-front church, a temple or ashram, by yourself, with a friend, or in community.

However you worship, every day is a good day to bow down in joy and gratitude at being alive, at being you, at being a unique and essential thread in the gorgeous tapestry of life.

I wish that joy for you, in this season of renewal, of hope, of life triumphant. May you celebrate—in "good" days or "bad"—your own unique connection with the divine and allow the creative and healing power in the universe to surge through you for the benefit of all beings.

I would ask, too, that you join all of us at Fellowship in Prayer in wishing Godspeed to our editor of ten years - Mary Ford-Grabowsky - who is leaving us to take up an exciting new position on the west coast, where she will be working with Matt Fox to help shape his new University of Creation Spirituality. Mary has done a splendid job at Fellowship in Prayer, her new job is a wonderful opportunity for her, and we wish her every succes in the world.



Paul Walsh

FROM THE EDITOR: A TIME TO SAY GOODBYE

Beloved Friends, deep sadness and very great joy are vying for space in my soul today. Sadly, I am announcing my resignation from Fellowship in Prayer -- after the symbolic number of ten years -- and joyfully, I am accepting a position as Vice President of the University of Creation Spirituality founded by one of the great spiritual leaders of our time, Matthew Fox. Before leaving, I want to say thank you with all my heart for the beautiful letters and messages you have sent me through the years, and for the immense joy I have experienced meeting so many of you.

While I am returning to academics, it is not at all to a traditional or secular academic setting. UCS is modelled on the Cathedral School at Chartres in the 12th century, and is intended to "reinvent" and reunite in a most sacred way "the two greatest failures of the 20th century," religion and education. I will be teaching Masters and Doctor of Ministry courses on the mystical journey and deep prayer.

As soon as my new book, Prayers of Love, is completed, I will move to Oakland, CA, where dozens of wonderful teachers are coming together not only to impart knowledge but with the sacred vision of renewing every area of human life. People like Gerry Brown, Clarissa Pinkola-Estes, Anita Roddick, and Rupert Sheldrake will be teaching courses designed to transform government, science, business, art, and law. What I love most about the whole University is "the sacred cave," a renovated basement where 40 young artists are already at work "reinventing" ritual for the 21st century.

It is hard to say goodbye, but it is time. Please know that I leave you with much love.

Mary Ford-Grabowsky

For information on UCS, just call
1-800-973-2228

Joy and Loving Kindness: An Interview with Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche

The Venerable Lama Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche and his brother, Venerable Lama Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche, were born in the Dhoshul region of eastern Tibet. The family was semi-nomadic, living in the village during the winter and moving with the herds to high mountain pastures where they lived in yak hair tents during the summers. The monastery for the Dhoshul region was called Gochen, and their father's family had the hereditary responsibility for administration of the business affairs of the monastery. Their grandfather had been both administrator and chantmaster in charge of the ritual ceremonies.*

At the age of five Khenpo Tsewang entered Gochen monastery and studied there until the communist Chinese invasion of Tibet forced him to flee with his family. There he continued his studies, earning two B.A.'s and a M.A.

Subsequently, he taught poetry, philosophy, and psychology, as well as Dharma studies, at the Nyingma Institute in Nepal. In 1980 he was called to the United States to work with Dudjom Rinpoche at the Yeshe Nyingpo Center in New York.

Khenpo Tsewang has written two books of poetry and is currently working on a two-volume history of Tibet. A book which he co-authored with his brother, The Door to Inconceivable Wisdom and Compassion, *was recently published by Sky Dancer Press.***

*In 1988 he and his brother, Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche, founded the Padmasambhava*** Buddhist Center, a nonprofit religious organization. The Padmasambhava Buddhist Center now has chapters in twelve cities in the United States, including Puerto Rico, and two in Moscow, Russia. The primary center is located in New York City where the brothers maintain their permanent residence. Other centers, at this writing, are located in Florida, Tennessee, Maine, Delaware, Illinois, New Mexico, California, Colorado, and Princeton, New Jersey. Khenpo Tsewang has taught in Tibet, India, Nepal, England, France, Belgium, Australia, Canada, Russia, Puerto Rico and throughout the United States.*

The interview that follows took place in the Rinpoches' New York City apartment and was conducted by Paul Walsh, president of Fellowship in Prayer, and FiP Advisor Anne Walsh, a Jungian analyst with a practice in New York and Princeton, New Jersey.

* Rinpoche: a title of great respect bestowed upon especially qualified masters.

**You may order a copy through you local bookstore or by writing to: Sky Dancer Press, P.O. Box 1830, Boca Raton, FL 33429.

***Padmasambhava: 8th c. founder of Tibetan Buddhism, especially revered by the Nyingma School, oldest of the four principal schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

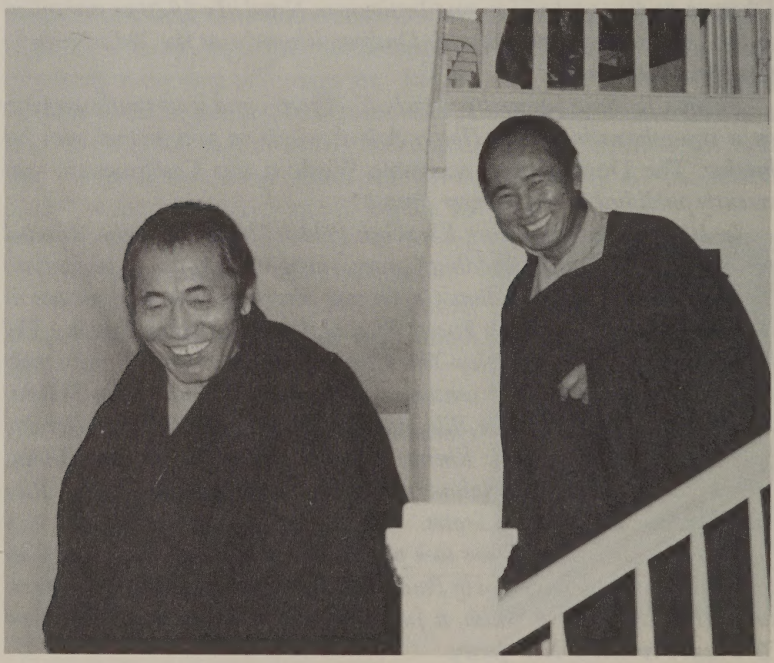
FIP: Your principal mission is to teach the Buddha dharma.

KHENPO TSEWANG: That's true.

FIP: As I understand it, the essence of that teaching is to develop one's innate love, compassion, and wisdom and then to use those qualities for the benefit of all other beings.

KHENPO TSEWANG: That's right.

FIP: Suppose, then, I came to you and said, "I'm really doing very well. I have a good job, enough money, a nice family, good health—yet I'm not happy. Something is missing. I don't know what. I've gone here and there looking for answers, but nothing seems to work. Could you help me?



Ron Wagner

Khenchen Palden Sherab and Khenpo Tsewang coming down the stairs at Fellowship in Prayer to give a teaching.

KHENPO TSEWANG: I would say that you need to develop or bring out more your spiritual qualities. According to Buddha's teaching, we have to work out a balance between our inward life—the life of the spirit—and our outward life in the world. If you haven't made that balance, or if the connection between your inner wisdom and your outer actions is weak, you will feel incomplete, dissatisfied, unhappy. So you need to look inward more. Looking deeply into your heart you discover your true natural state: your love, kindness, compassion, appreciation and respect. I would say that you have to look more deeply inward and then meditate on and cultivate your natural love and compassion, your Buddha nature.

FIP: You say that my own true nature is loving and compassionate—but it's often difficult to get in touch with those qualities and to act on them. How can we develop our connection with love and compassion?

KHENPO TSEWANG: To begin with, we need to develop a sense of appreciation for ourselves—our basic goodness. We also need to have confidence. Self-confidence is very important. Of course, sometimes we make mistakes and have weak areas in our lives. But, after all, we also have many, many rich qualities. So we shouldn't feel we are bad, shouldn't think that we don't have these qualities of love and compassion. Negative thoughts are only our confused emotions, our thinking mind. Our thoughts and emotions are just the games of the brain. In our hearts, really deep down, we have a lot of beautiful qualities. So self-confidence is really important. And then we need to appreciate our opportunities, our situations. According to Buddhism, to be a human being is very special. And then to have all the necessities of life is also very special. We must appreciate all that and have self-confidence.

Do whatever you can with happiness and joy.

And with that comes love. Love is no other than appreciation and seeing the beauty of ourselves and others. That is love, to feel the warmness and the closeness. Everybody has the ability to love. No one is missing that. We have to bring that out more, we have to feel more love for ourselves. Be kind to ourselves and do things that will be of real benefit to us spiritually. When we begin to do that, then maybe we can do loving and helpful things for others too. So that is love. Doing good things for ourselves, avoiding harmful activities—drugs

for example—anything that will hurt Your body, Your speech or mind. When people do negative things like that, they are not loving to themselves. They have lost control, and they don't know how to give love to others. So first learn to love yourself. Be kind to yourself, and with that you will feel more relaxed and happy, more joyful. Then you begin to share those feelings with others, with your friends and family, and then you begin to expand that loving kindness out into the world.

FIP: That's a wonderful aspiration—to learn to love yourself—and then to treat everyone else with the same loving kindness. It's so hard to do that, though.

More and more of the people we meet are wanting and practicing love, kindness, and compassion. People are trying in their own lives to bring about harmony and peace.

KHENPO TSEWANG: Everybody falls short of their best intentions. So we shouldn't feel that we are a terrible person if we make mistakes. If we start thinking that way we lose our self-confidence. We should not really blame and blame and regret and regret. That is never going to help us. We should remember that everybody makes mistakes. We learn from them and try to do better. Have the courage and commitment to take as your example the great beings who really did good things. You can do the same. Just be sure to do your meditation and spiritual practice regularly and call on the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for their blessings and assistance. Have confidence that through your practice and prayers your negativities and obstacles will be purified.

And then together with the power of your motivation and with courage, say to yourself, "I am not going to repeat that mistake as I have many times before. I made that mistake and I learned a lesson." So take your mistakes as learning activities, as lessons, and then use your courage to avoid them in the future. That is how we learn to be different. Buddha nature—and we all have Buddha nature—is love, is compassion, is kindness. That love is very special, love is beauty, love is warmth, love is very peaceful. When you don't feel the love in your heart, you need to completely relax your mind. Let go of all thoughts and emotions and spend more time in meditation. Then you begin to appreciate what you have. If you appreciate, then love will come, love will radiate out. This natural love is very open, very relaxed. Love is beauty, calmness and openness. This love is not a matter of emotion. We're not talking about love as an emotional feeling. When you start thinking that way, then you really don't find love. Instead you will

probably find disappointment.

According to Buddha's teachings, inspiration is very important, inspiration derived from meditating on the "four boundless qualities."

Ron Wagner

The Khenpos answer questions at an annual summer retreat.

FIP: What are they?

KHENPO TSEWANG: They are boundless love, boundless compassion, boundless joy and boundless equanimity, and there are prayers for them.

The first boundless prayer says, "May all beings enjoy happiness and the cause of happiness." That's known as concentrating on the practice of love. The second says, "May all beings be free from suffering and the cause of suffering." That's concentrating on the practice of boundless compassion. The third is, "May they never be dissociated from the supreme happiness which is without suffering." That's concentrating on the practice of boundless joy, and the fourth one is, "May they remain in boundless equanimity, free from both attachment and rejection." Another way to say that would be, "May all beings enjoy great harmony, great pervading harmony for everyone." So those are the four boundless prayers. It is really important to say them, think of their meaning, and meditate on them.

FIP: We also need to act on them, don't we?

KHENPO TSEWANG: That's true. We are inspired by our meditating and we need to reflect our thoughts in our actions. We do what we can according to our capabilities. Do whatever you can with happiness and joy so that even one week after, you can remember that you did something really wonderful. That is known as practicing love and compassion.

I think people are realizing that science and technology and material "progress" are not enough—that the path to happiness is a spiritual path.

FIP: Khenpo, that practice seems fine for someone with what you might call an existential pain, but what about someone who has a very painful physical illness or is facing death, or someone with a loved one who is very close to them and is facing death? Some people I work with come into therapy, or have taken up meditation practice, to try to avoid their pain. They've tried to hide their pain, but then it comes up, it comes in the back door. What would you say?

KHENPO TSEWANG: There are different ways to deal with illness and physical pain. First, according to Buddhism, pain and sickness do not just happen by themselves. They have causes and conditions. Very many times pain and illness have something to do with karma. So we have the thought, "If this is my karma, now it is paid back." So your sickness is not just meaningless, you are purifying karma the hard way. Also, if you practice Buddhism, or even if you don't, when you get sick, you should think, "This sickness is not just my sickness but I am sick for all beings, may my sickness from now on eliminate the sickness of all other beings." If you think that way it is also one of the great Buddhist healing practices. It is not just that you're sick but you have the motivation to change the whole sickness process for everybody.

FIP: Then as a teacher, you are in danger of taking into yourself a very powerful sickness. How do you protect yourself?

KHENPO TSEWANG: There are different ways, as the Buddha and the great masters have taught. One way is that as you take those

sicknesses in, you meditate on Bodhicitta—the union of true love, true compassion and wisdom. The moment you do that, the power of your *Bodhicitta* transforms that sickness into health. So the sickness of the other being does not become sickness for you, but is purified and increases your love and compassion.

So that is one way. Another way is when you take in the other person's sickness, you don't think about the sickness, but you think of the good health and strength you are sending back to that other person—the sickness will be transformed.

Everybody falls short of their best intentions.

FIP: What does someone do with their own sickness? When you yourself are ill, how do you work with your own illness?

KHENPO TSEWANG: There are different ways to work with your own sickness. If you practice Buddhism, you might visualize the Buddha Vajrasattva above your head, and recite his mantra *(Om Vajra Sattva Hum)*; you receive the blessing nectar flowing from him through your crown chakra*, purifying and transforming that sickness and completely curing it. Or visualize Guru Padmasambhava right in front of you and then start reciting his mantra (*Om Ah Hum Vajra Guru Padma Siddi Hum)*. While you are reciting the mantra strong wisdom lights come from the body of Guru Padmasambhava to your whole body, and in particular to the area where you are sick. And again, that healing light will completely purify the sickness. Those are just two meditations. As we said before, we do this with the motivation of *bodhicitta*, accepting the sickness courageously and transforming it into love and compassion for the sake of all beings.

FIP: So much like Christ on the cross.

KHENPO TSEWANG: That's true. Christ died for the sins of other beings. So the thought, "I am sick for all other beings, may those beings not feel this sickness," is a very powerful practice.

FIP: Is it possible to experience union with the ultimate reality in one lifetime?

KHENPO TSEWANG: I think so. According to the Buddha's

*The crown chakra refers to the highest of seven energy centers in the human body.

teaching and that of many ancient masters, they really did achieve union with ultimate reality in one lifetime. Definitely. In order to do that you must have great courage, great commitment and joyful effort. You must receive the teachings properly and practice the *dharma* day and night. I think definitely you can do that. The great ancient masters are the examples. Of course it depends. Some high-capability beings may not have to exert much effort. But most of us need great effort, commitment, and courage. Realization of ultimate reality will not come overnight or in just one minute.

FIP: Can this be done without a teacher?

KHENPO TSEWANG: Realization? According to Buddha's teaching, some individuals can do without a teacher, but those individuals had teachers in past lifetimes. They have been highly developed in past lives. That happens very seldom. Most of the time we need a teacher. Without a teacher, you will not progress. It is like causes and conditions. Even if you have the perfect cause, without the conditions—the teacher—you really cannot develop.

Ron Wagner

Prayer is an important part of every Buddhist ritual.

FIP: It seems that more and more people are studying and practicing with spiritual teachers like yourself and your brother. And I would like to think that as an increasing number of people practice the *dharma* and radiate out the love and compassion that is at the heart of your teaching, we could create a more peaceful world.

KHENPO TSEWANG: Yes, I really think so. Of course, often the teachings speak of the degenerate times we are in now, but at the same time there are many great spiritual beings in our world today. We see that when we are traveling and teaching. More and more of the people we meet are wanting and practicing love, kindness, and compassion. People are trying in their own lives and circumstances to bring about harmony and peace. That is the sign, otherwise we don't have any other evidence. But when you see that, that is solid evidence.

Really everywhere we go, in this country, in Russia, in India and Puerto Rico, people are wanting to practice. We pray for this to continue and grow and that no major obstacles come.

FIP: It may take time to shake people up, to get us out of our anger and fear and feel what's missing. And I think people are realizing that science and technology and material "progress" are not enough—that the path to happiness is a spiritual path.

KHENPO TSEWANG: That is really true. Appreciation of spiritual qualities is really increasing because everywhere people are looking more to the heart, looking more for peace and love and compassion.

FIP: It's interesting, too—and significant—that more and more people are interested in and looking to Buddhism as a spiritual path that is really based on the practice of love and compassion.

KHENPO TSEWANG: That's true. I think Buddhism is becoming more accepted as more people understand the meaning and the purpose of Buddhist practice. The whole Buddhist teaching is based on loving kindness toward yourself and all beings, and in the *vajrayana* teaching that is the heart of the practice. All the rituals, prayers, ceremonies—all that is the practice, provoking and revealing our love, compassion and wisdom.

Holyday of Hope

JEROME B. ROBBEN

A family celebrates Easter with "that tremendous feast which only grandparents seem capable of producing."

For most of my youth our family gathered on Easter Sunday at the home of my maternal Grandparents. It was a day steeped in traditions and customs which only later took on the deeper meanings I cherish today.

We were met at the door by my Grandfather who proclaimed in his native tongue the good news that Jesus was risen—followed immediately with the offer of a small portion of Kummel, a clear drink with the taste of caraway and the bite of alcohol. Even we little ones were given a taste as Grandfather would dip his fingertips into the glass and touch our lips.

And then the embrace, the great bear hug from this peasant man with the immense gray moustache. After that we were escorted down the long hall into the dining room.

The drapes would be drawn and the room dim except for the flickering light of a large candle upon the table. Surrounding that candle were eggs dyed with the juice of red beets, and great loaves of homemade bread just brought back from Church where they had been given a special blessing.

> Perhaps it is time to return to traditions, for they, like icons, are windows to the Truth.

As we stood there—the entire family, present from all parts of the city and county—Grandfather would make the rounds to each, continuing the tradition of Easter. To each person he would extend both of his hands and lay them on top of that person's head and say a short blessing. It sang with the rolling rhythm of the native language and seemed so other-worldly, so special, so holy. Roughly translated, Grandfather's words wished each of us another year of breaking bread with the risen Lord.

Jerome Robben, a freelance writer in St. Louis, MO, is a regular contributor to Fellowship In Prayer.

Then my Grandmother, who had baked the bread and had presented it to the priest for blessing, gave each of us a slice of this special holiday bread. It was manna to us, a bread worthy to offer to the Lord. It was more than just eating bread. It was a union of bonding and love. It was a simple act sanctified by the moment—an instant of closeness to the risen Christ.

After that the meal, that tremendous feast which only grandparents seem capable of producing. Foods from the old country; served only on this holiday. Everything had tradition cooked with it and history served alongside. This was my people; they gave themselves with that meal.

At the head of the table sat Grandfather. At the other end the candle had been moved to remain standing in front of a place setting which was reserved for our special Guest, the risen Lord. His Presence was felt.

And after the meal, each year, another tradition. We all sat in the living room and Grandfather would tell us a story. It never varied, yet never grew old. There was something mystical in that story and we all were moved by it.

Patchwork quilt from Chile.

Quilt depicting life in Chile.

It was the story of our people. Grandfather spoke of how our people were intimately linked with the Passion of Jesus. they, too, suffered a journey along the way to Golgatha. They, too, knew the pain of rejection and that of betrayal. they, too, suffered the fear and the loneliness of the Garden. Friends abandoned them also. Denied them. They faced the cross daily.

And that, he would say, is why Easter is such a special holyday for us. Not only do we join Jesus in His passion but we look forward to joining Him in the resurrection too. This is the holyday of hope; this is the prayer of our people, and the promises of the Savior.

Two images come to me strongly even today. One is of my Grandmother sitting there with her apron covering her eyes during the story. The other is the uncovered tears rolling down my Grandfather's cheeks.

But always (always!) there were smiles at the end, for these were faith-filled people. Peasant people whose strength of faith impresses me to this day.

Perhaps it is time to return to traditions, for they, like icons, are windows to the Truth. In the breaking of bread we recognize the risen Lord. In breaking bread together, we find God in our midst.

This Earth, Our Home

O God, we thank you for this earth, our home;
for the wide sky and the blessed sun,
for the salt sea and the running water,
for the everlasting hills and the never-resting winds,
for the trees and the common grass underfoot.

We thank you for our sense by which we hear
the songs of the birds,
and see the splendor of the summer fields,
and taste of the autumn fruits,
and rejoice in the feel of the snow,
and smell the breath of the spring.

Grant us a heart wide open to all this beauty,
and save our souls from being so blind
that we pass unseeing when even the common thornbush
is aflame with your glory.

O God our creator
who lives and reigns
for ever and ever.
Walter Rauschenbusch

Wildness

What would the world be, once bereft
of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.
Gerard Manley Hopkins

The prayers on this page are from The Gift of Prayer: A Treasury of Prayer from the World's Spiritual Traditions, *a Fellowship in Prayer book. Ask for it at your local bookstore. Over 400 classic and contemporary prayers.*

Sometimes a Verse Seizes Us In Its Talons

SUSAN SCHNUR

Ancient stories from the Old Testament continue to transform lives.

Once, many years ago in synagogue during the High Holidays, I was leading my congregation in prayer as usual (I'm a rabbi), when a verse suddenly popped out at me from the prayer book that had never been there before:

"They lie in unmarked graves," ran the line, "their very lives begrudged them."

I burst into tears up there on the *bimah*, and my congregation read on without me.

I had had a miscarriage that previous spring, but on that day in synagogue that experience was nowhere (or so I thought); on my mind. Looking back, though, to April, I realized that I had not grieved my small loss. Instead, I had spent two numb days in the hospital, and then had hurled myself aggressively back at life.

In a sense, I had left a part of me still back there on the ward, and in an unguarded moment—which is what prayer is—I had returned to collect it.

"They lie in unmarked graves," ran the verse. "Their very lives begrudged them," and I finally heard it.

God keeps faith.

The next year, I think it was, on Rosh Hashana morning, I looked out from the bimah to see Holly, a young widow, crying quietly into her hand during the prayer called the Amidah. For the first time since her husband's death, Holly had come to synagogue with a new boyfriend. After services, I looked for her.

"I'm fine," she said to me. "I had this incredible moment."

And she described how this phrase had just leaped out at her from the prayer book: "Oomehkayem ehmunato leshaynay afar. God keeps faith with those who sleep in dust."

"And I realized," she told me, "that I'd been walking around so guilty—trying to be somehow with both my dead husband and with my boyfriend at the same time. And I couldn't do it. And suddenly it was so quiet in the sanctuary," she said. "And I swear I saw my own name

A rabbi, writer, and editor, Susan Schnur lives in Hopewell, NJ, with her husband and two children.

on the page. It said, "GOD keeps faith with those who sleep in dust, Holly. Not you. God."

Tom Dunham

Into the Depths of the Sea.

One *tashlich* — the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashana, when everybody walks down to the river to symbolically throw their year's sins into the water — Lew, a congregant who was around 60, started to cry. He had been unemployed for two years, and he was very bitter. No one would even look at his resume, he told anyone who asked, because he was over 40; because our culture is so ageist.

"I was throwing my bits of bread into the water like every year," Lew told me later, "and I was thinking what I was always thinking," which was: "Oh, this is what society's done to you, Lew, just thrown you down a river."

"And suddenly," he said, "we were saying", 'Cast all of your sins into the depths of the sea' [*"v'tashlich bim-tzu-loat yahm"*], and the word 'your' just jumped right at me. 'Cast your sins,' the verse said, 'into the depths of the sea.'

"And I started to cry," he said, "because I realized that I'd been throwing in everyone's sins but my own. My sin, I saw for the first time: It was this endless bitterness. And it was time to cast it into the sea."

"Go to Ninevah."

It's late in the afternoon on Yom Kippur, and a congregant named Danny, in his late 20s, is leading us in chanting the book of Jonah, as is traditional, and I see — because I'm sharing the book with Danny upon the *bimah* — one tear plop onto the Hebrew page.

Later Danny tells me, "Something happened."

And he tells me the story of Jonah: "God says to Jonah," says Danny, "Go to Ninevah, Jonah. Go to Ninevah, you idiot — that's your destiny. Can't you see? You're going to end up there anyway — and it's the right place for you.

"But no," Danny continues, "Jonah runs in the 180-degree opposite direction — and there are storms and this crazy lottery, sailors who throw him overboard, this giant fish who eats him."

God says to Jonah,..."Go to Ninevah"...But no, ...Jonah runs in the 180-degree opposite direction and there are storms and ths crazy lottery, sailors who throw him overboard, this giant fish eats him.

"All of a sudden," says Danny, "I was up there on the *bimah*, and it was totally silent in the sanctuary. And I heard myself chanting about me. This was my life I was broadcasting to everyone. Teachers, friends, my sister, everyone had said to me for years, "Danny, go to Ninevah." Why do you always run in the most painful opposite direction?

The courage to feel.

It's quiet in the synagogue during the High Holidays. Despite the shofar's loud blasting and the priests' terrifying *duchaning*, despite the litanies of martyrs and the revisiting of animals sacrificed in deserts — it's quiet. And in this quiet, prayer sometimes gives us a gift: the courage to feel what frightens us.

"No one converses with me besides myself," is how Nietzsche put it. "And my voice reaches me as the voice of one dying."

Grief that we've remaindered in a hospital; life that we've been too guilty to inscribe; time that we've held hostage in our bitterness; our very choices flailing against what fits us. Pieces of our selves, abandoned here and there.

It's quiet in the synagogue, and a verse seizes us in its talons—and makes us prey. And that "still small voice" is just ours.

"They lie in unmarked graves," ran the prayer when I needed it. "Their very lives begrudged them. In far-off forests and in lonely fields. And the substance of many is scattered by the winds to the earth's four corners. Yet they shall not be forgotten. We take them into our hearts,

and give them a place. **AMEN.**"

"When the storyteller is loyal to the story," wrote Hannah Arendt, "there, in the end, silence will speak. Where the story has been betrayed, silence is but emptiness. But we, the faithful," she wrote, "will hear the voice of silence."

... in this quiet, prayer sometimes gives us a gift: the courage to feel what frightens us.

Not Without a Clue

THOMAS S. BAKER

A Presbyterian minister finds daily reasons to trust in God's promises.

Our dog Bonnie lives without hope. At least that's the way it seems to me. She is extremely attached to my wife, Carole, and every time Carole leaves the house, the dog just sighs and curls up in a ball on the living room floor. When Carole returns, Bonnie yelps, runs around in circles and manifests what I can only describe as genuine ecstasy. It makes no difference whether Carole has been gone for half an hour or a day; the reaction is the same. I can only surmise that when Carole leaves, the dog things "well, that's it, she's never coming back...it's just me and the old man and the kid." And when Carole comes back, it's, "Oh wow,-I can't believe it She came back, she's here. This is too good to be true!" So, to me, it seems as if the dog has no hope, no imagination or thought that, once departed, her favorite human being will ever return. She may have memories, I suppose; she may lie on the floor and think, "Well it was nice while she was here, but now she's gone." But it doesn't seem to occur to her that Carole will ever return. I am also quite happy when my wife returns, but I do not run around in circles and jump up and down. That's partly because I have the capacity to hope: to take my past and present experiences and project them into the future. Part of hope is the ability to believe that what has been will be again.

But that is only part of what hope is. Hope also involves imagination, the capacity to believe that things which have never happened before may happen in the future. In this sense, hope allows us to envision change and keeps us from feeling that life will be just an endless repetition of the same old events. In this sense, faith comes into play. It requires faith to believe that what has never been may actually come to pass. Paul says: "Now hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he sees?"

But if hope means seeing the future as open to change; it means our dreams and now vaguely held notions may actually become reality. We

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cannot be sure now — (if we were sure now, hope would not be necessary). We can only take hints, dreams and expectations of our lives and, through faith, trust that God will do what God promises.

Hope involves a certain amount of fantasy or even what we might call "wishful thinking." That is the easy part and that part does not require much faith. When I'm feeling stressed or burnt out at work, I sometimes escape into daydreams of personal glory which, in my case usually involve hitting a game-winning home run or making a leaping catch to save the game. I should point out that such fantasies are not easy to come by, based on my real-life experience. Last summer I played ball in the USMOT league. I am 13 years older than the next oldest

Michelle Boyd

It's safe to let go.

man on the team and an average player at best. There has, to date, been a considerable gap between what I think or hope I can do and what actually happens. When at bat, I envisage a screaming line drive to deep center field. In reality, the best I have managed to date is a series of slow ground balls to the second baseman who throws me out with little difficulty. But, based on wishful thinking, I still have hope, which, even in something as trivial as baseball, is not such a bad thing. I've given up hoping to make the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, but I keep thinking that sooner or later I will hit a ball where the other team doesn't have a player and I will actually get to first base before the ball does.

It's not much but it keeps me going.

Real hope, for things of real significance, requires faith. An image which I have always found helpful in understanding this comes from Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish theologian. When I was in seminary in the late sixties, Kierkegaard was quite popular; partly, I think, because he was known for being depressed, anxious, and uncertain and, in the late sixties, it was quite fashionable for seminarians to be all those things. Kierkegaard was a minister who was bothered by all the hypocrisy and injustice in the church. In his efforts to strip away all the sham and falsehood, he arrived at a position where he even doubted the existence of God. It occurred to him that one could not prove the existence of God based on prior experience or reason alone. One could hope that God was real and that the message of the Gospel would come to pass, but you could not know ahead of time. Thus, as with Paul, faith became all important to Kierkegaard. Taking some liberties with an image he used, I would explain it like this.

Picture yourself running across a hot, dry, dusty desert. You have been running for as long as you can remember. You are exhausted and without hope. Behind you are all your enemies: all the problems, fears and uncertainties you have ever experienced. They are on horseback and they are gaining on you. They are so close that you can almost feel the house's breath on the back of your neck. Again, there is a sense of dread and hopelessness as you feel your strength ebbing and your stride slowing. Just then, when all seems lost, you look up and see a cliff, enshrouded by fog, but a few feet in front of you. You quickly recall that all your life you have been told that you would come to such a place and that, on the other side of the cliff, beyond the fog, was a pair of loving hands that would reach across the chasm, catch you, and cradle you safely on the other side. You have, in a split second, a decision to make. You can stay where you are and know that you will be crushed by your enemies, or you can take what Kierkegaard called the "leap of faith," and jump into the fog with the hope of being caught and made

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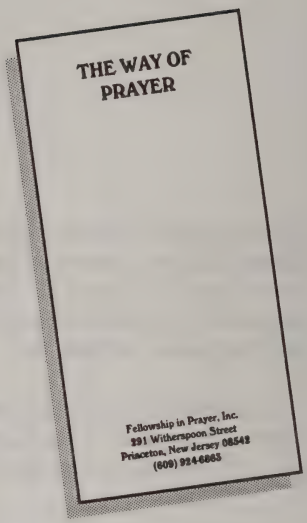

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What would you like to tell us about your spiritual needs, desires, experiences? About *Fellowship in Prayer*? Use the space below!

safe again. In that split-second decision hope and faith are united and action takes place. The crucial thing is that there is no way to know before you jump that you will be caught. If you have felt God's power in your life, if there have been "hints"and dreams in your past which tell you that your hope is justified, that certainly helps, but, in each new instant, hope must be fueled by faith for the leap to take place. Indeed, for Kierkegaard, this is when we are most fully human and the least like other creatures: it is our capacity to respond to the images of our hope through faith which sets us apart.

In Paul's letter to the Romans he speaks to Christians who—to say the least—have been having a hard time of it. Being a follower of Jesus in Rome in the first century was not easy, and persecution was rampant. The dominant religions of the time were essentially quite cynical and based on the "get all you can while you can" ethic. To be sure, there were gods in the Roman systems, but apparently no one took them seriously. The upper classes lived luxuriously for the here and now while the lower classes suffered on without hope. Paul spoke to those who suffered and encouraged them to bear with the difficulties because something better was coming. And he reminded the early followers of Jesus that they already had hints of what God could do and would do for those who could, through faith, endure the suffering and keep hope alive. He said, in effect, that Christians are not without a clue, that God continues to give us reasons to hope, that as God has transformed the creation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, so God can transform individual lives. Paul points out that there have been hints and clues all along. He suggests that faith enables us to see the hand of God at work, in history and in our individual lives, he says that as the Jews wandered in the wilderness motivated by the hope that perhaps just over the horizon they would find the city of God, so we too can have hope that our individual wanderings and sufferings will end in the presence of God.

I have witnessed countless examples of faith-based hope breaking the grip of despair and death.

The reasons we are not without a clue are legion. In the work I do as a counselor, I have witnessed countless examples of faith-based hope breaking the grip of despair and death and transforming individual lives and relationships. I have seen people mired in the endless, hopeless repetitions of addictive behavior who have taken the leap of faith and trusted that God's love—as mediated through persons in recovery—could break the cycle of addiction. Addiction is a terrible disease which

normally leads to much suffering and ultimately to death. Given the power of this disease and the biological drive to continue in addictive behavior, it should be hopeless. But when addicted people see hints and get clues that recovery is possible, when they experience the transforming love of God in the lives of those who once suffered as they do—and when they are willing to believe that they can be transformed, too—something little short of miraculous happens. Through hope, these people come to see that the past does not dictate the future, that the cycle of addiction can be broken, that God can do for them what they cannot do for themselves. This does not mean that they will be instantly relieved of suffering. It simply means that they will come to believe that healthy living is possible and they will become grounded in the hope that human existence is more rich and more fulfilling than they could ever have imagined.

Corporate America used to be based on a kind of pseudo-hope. It was thought that if you entered the ranks of a corporation, worked hard, learned and practiced corporate politics, and followed the rules, you were guaranteed a bright, upwardly mobile future with rich financial rewards and personal status. That has changed and so have the images which motivate people to keep working. It used to be that people hoped for long careers marked at the end by lavish farewells and comfortable retirements. Now, many in corporate life dimply hope that they will still have their job at the end of the week and they hope that once the machinery of downsizing and reengineering has done its work, they will be able to find some sort of work which will enable them to sustain themselves and their families. Even here, there is an opportunity for faith and redirected hope to transform lives and relationships. I have seen persons with the illusion of life-long promotion and employment shattered who have redirected their hope and their efforts toward rebuilding and reinventing their marriages or other relationships. I have seen people for whom family and friends were merely accoutrements for the proper corporate life rediscover that perhaps there is something of far greater value to be gained by working on a loving relationship than by climbing up the corporate ladder. In short, what seems like unfair and undeserved suffering becomes a means for God to redirect a life toward a more loving and fulfilling end.

I have had the opportunity over the past few months to talk with a man who is dying of AIDS, and I have had the gift of seeing once again how hope can transform a seemingly hopeless situation. This man is going to die, his physical condition has deteriorated markedly and at most he has another few months to live. Yet he has hope and even a sense of gratitude which is remarkable. He is a recovering alcoholic and drug addict who, even in his sobriety, maintained a certain sense of

"Hope must be fueled by faith for the leap to take place."

bitterness about events in his past. Three years ago he was diagnosed with AIDS and since then—not without some anger and much suffering—he has lost his bitterness and cynicism and come to terms with his illness and with the life he has remaining. In awe of his journey and transformation, I asked him a few weeks ago how he did it, how he got the courage to face each day. He said two things: first, that he did not do it, but rather it was done for him by some power beyond him when he allowed himself to dare to hope. Second, he said—with regard to hope and courage—"you only get it when you really need it." That, it seems to me, is another terribly important aspect of hope. It is available to us through God's grace only when we really need it. When we come to our individual fog-enshrouded cliffs, when all our human resources are exhausted, it is then that God reaches across the chasm and catches us. It is then that, through faith, we apprehend God's love.

Viktor Frankl was a Jewish physician who was imprisoned in a Nazi war camp during the Second World War. As he struggled to keep alive, he noted a curious phenomenon: some of the camp inmates died within a few weeks of being locked up, many with few signs of outward illness. Others seemed to be able to endure the most brutal treatment and deprivation and still go on. In his book, Man's Search For Meaning, he explains how he arrived at the conclusion that it was hope which kept the latter group alive.

Those who dared to hope—to hope for being reunited with their families and friends, to believe that God would somehow see them through the unspeakable misery—managed to survive. As Frankl put it: "Those who have a why can endure almost any how"; those who, through a leap of faith, can hope to be restored to the presence of family, or friends, or God, can withstand almost anything.

Those who have a why can endure almost any how.

Again, I suspect none of us is "without a clue" concerning hope. I would guess that everyone of us has had one or many experiences in which the hand of God has caught and cradled us and brought us down gently to the other side. Through faith—which is God's gift to us—we can be sure that, just when we need it, God will be there.

Our dog will go on being absolutely amazed everytime Carole returns. I will go on hoping that someday I will actually get a bona fide base hit (for which I hope I will be boosted onto the shoulders of my ecstatic teammates.) Of far greater importance, God will go on doing what God has always done: giving us hints and clues and dreams and the stuff of which hope is made.

Spiritual Journeys in Aging: a Buddhist View

RONALD Y. NAKASONE

In elderhood, as in all stages of life, accepting kindness is as much a virtue as giving it.

In each stage of life we depend on people at other stages of life. The infant cannot develop trust without the mother, and the mother cannot develop care and avoid self absorption without the infant. A child can develop competence with the aid of good teachers, and the teacher needs pupils in order to increase fidelity and develop caring. The life-cycle includes and interrelates everyone. It is cyclical, not vertical. The aged person who has achieved wisdom is not "wiser" than the baby who has realized the wisdom which is appropriate to its own stage. Each individual, at whatever stage he or she may be, has an equally vital role in nurturing the well-being of others.

Mutual Responsibility

The elderly by virtue of their experience have much to contribute and should continue to share their wisdom and skills with their families, their communities and the world. Joan and Erik Erikson* wrote in *Vital Involvement in Old Age*, "With their special perspective on the life cycle, (elders) are in a position to serve as guides for the futures of those who follow." Unfortunately, too often elders are ignored because of their diminishing physical and mental capacities. However, by understanding the interdependence and interconnectedness of all age groups, we will be able to instill in ourselves and our children an attitude that acknowledges the contributions of older people as a worthy and valued gift. The Eriksons wrote:

> No matter how long one's life expectancy is, one must face oneself as one who shares an all-human existential identity...[and]...share the responsibility of the generations for

**The Eriksons are particularly well known in the field of psychology for their formulation of eight stages of human development.* —Ed.

A buddhist priest and professor at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA, Ronald Nakasone is the author of numerous scholarly and inspirational works.

each other. When we finally retire from familial and generational involvement, we must, where and when possible, bond with other old-age groups in different parts of the world, learning to talk and to listen with a growing sense of all-human mutuality.

Ron Nakasone

In Buddhism the belief in an interdependent world provides a sense of community and identity with all, the vision for working together for mutual benefit, and the basis for trusting the deepest instincts of our humanity. Life, ours and the larger world community's, is thus a perpetual adventure. As we involve ourselves in the world and with others we have the opportunity to explore our essential humanity. This approach to life is also articulated by the Eriksons, who have stated, "People learn to be human by being involved with other people."

Mutual Dependence.

Old Age, like the other stages of life, has its particular problems and strengths. Elders must accept their weaknesses and exploit their strengths. One of the greatest problems for our senior citizens is accepting the fact that they cannot do things which they previously were able to perform with ease. All too often they insist on doing those chores which they are physically unable to do. The Eriksons wrote:

> Old age is necessarily a time of relinquishing—of giving up old friends, old roles, earlier work that was once meaningful, and even possessions that belong to a previous stage of life and are now an impediment to the resiliency and freedom that seem to be requisite for adapting to the unknown challenges that determine the final stage of life.

Years of being independent and ceaselessly giving, make it difficult to overcome pride. Inability to accept changed status and unwillingness to let go are burdens many of our elders carry. In the following dialogue, the Buddha asks the Brahmin Pingiya to let go of life itself.

> **Pingiya:** I am old and decaying. My body is weak and my skin pale. I can hardly see and I only hear with difficulty. Don't let me die while I am still in confusion but teach me about the Way Things Are so that I shall know how to leave birth and aging behind me.
>
> **Buddha:** If you do not want to go on and on becoming, Pingiya, you must let go of the body and of forms. ...Can you see how people are oppressed by desire? Can you see how they are racked and worn by aging? If you do not want to go on and on becoming, Pingiya, you must let go of craving.

We must, where and when possible, bond with other old-age groups in different parts of the world.

"If you do not want to go on and on becoming, Pingiya," you must let go of craving." The despairing Pingiya is struggling to maintain a sense of personal purpose in face of deteriorating physical and mental capabilities. The Buddha is asking him to accept among other things his mortality: To know the "Way Things Are," that is, to know that life is transient and that it is possible to transcend the pains of aging. Pingiya

must give up the oppression he perceives in old age, and approach death by opening to life.

The Buddha is trying to lead Pingiya to wisdom by asking him to understand and to accept his current condition and to prepare for death. It is through understanding of our limitations that we can transcend pain. The Buddha in all of his discourses never, to my knowledge, promised to end our suffering. Rather, he taught that through the affirmation of our suffering, we are better able to cope and transcend pain, and thereby affirm our humanity. His challenge to Pingiya is implicit in Erik and Joan Erikson's view of old age.

The Eriksons formulated eight stages of human development, the last of which is elderhood.

> It is through this last stage that the life cycle weaves back on itself in its entirety, ultimately integrating maturing forms of hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, and care, into a comprehensive sense of wisdom....The elder is challenged to draw on a life cycle that is far more nearly completed than yet to be lived, to consolidate a sense of wisdom with which to live out the future, to place him- or herself in perspective among those generations now living, and to accept his or her place in an infinite historical progression.

Wisdom, the expression which the Eriksons selected to symbolize the last stage of life, emerges from the experience of integrity.

> Wisdom is detached concern with life itself, in face of death itself. It maintains and learns to convey the integrity of experience in spite of the decline of bodily and mental functions.

The elderly Pingiya is struggling to hold on to his independence. Yet, one measure of spiritual maturity in Buddhism is gaged by the capacity to acknowledge one's dependency on others. Accepting kindnesses and knowing how to accept favors is a most difficult virtue. "When frailty takes over, dependence is appropriate, and one has no choice but to trust in the compassion of others," the Eriksons conclude. Further, elders should "Trust in interdependence. Give and accept help when it is needed."

In the final analysis the aged can only trust that they will be taken care of with love and dignity when they can no longer care for themselves. However, while they are able to, they should give abundantly of themselves and graciously have favors performed for them. "Perhaps the middle way is the hardest, since it involves accepting who and what you are with active compliance."

The "middle way" which the Eriksons speak of is the culmination of wisdom which is attained in Old Age. The "middle way" affirmation of the limitations which accompany old age with equanimity articulate the ideals of the Buddhist life. Buddhists refer to their spiritual path as the Middle Way. Originally the Middle Way meant the avoidance of the extremes of physical indulgence and the extreme of ascetic practice. When this principle is applied to the elder it means the wisdom to accept help when it is needed, and to share one's wisdom and give abundantly of oneself when possible. Those who observe the Middle Way will be able to face life with equanimity.

The elderly, by virtue of their experience, have much to contribute.

> One who follows the Middle Way will not maintain regrets, neither will he or she cherish anticipations, but, with an equitable and peaceful mind, will meet what comes.*

The Middle Way integrates the truth of interdependence in the spiritual life of an individual. Mutuality and interdependence, the substance of our lives, entail a sense of responsibility and gratitude. Our spiritual journey is an opportunity to deepen an appreciation for the truth of interdependence.

**From* The Teaching of the Buddha, *by Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai. —Ed.*

Guidelines for Interreligious Understanding

THOMAS KEATING

When world religious leaders convened to discuss their spiritual practices, they found a surprising number of similarities.

In 1984, I invited a group of spiritual teachers from a variety of the world religions—Buddhist, Tibetan Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Islamic, Native American, Russian Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic —to gather at St. Benedict's Monastery, Snowmass, Colorado, to meditate together in silence and to share our personal spiritual journeys, especially those elements in our respective traditions that have proved most helpful to us along the way.

We kept no record and published no papers. As our trust and friendship grew, we felt moved to investigate various points that we seemed to agree on. The original points of agreement were worked over during the course of subsequent meetings as we continued to meet, for a week or so each year. Our most recent list consists of the following eight points:

1. The world religions bear witness to the experience of Ultimate Reality to which they give various names: Brahman, Allah, Absolute, God, Great Spirit.

2. Ultimate Reality cannot be limited by any name or concept.

3. Ultimate Reality is the ground of infinite potentiality and actualization.

4. Faith is opening, accepting and responding to Ultimate Reality. Faith in this sense precedes every belief system.

5. The potential for human wholeness—or in other frames of reference,

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Father Thomas Keating, O.C.S.O., is a prominent voice in worldwide inter-religious dialogue.

enlightenment, salvation, transformation, blessedness, *nirvana*—is present in every human person.

We became more honest in stating frankly what we believed and why, without at the same time making any effort to convince others of our own position.

6. Ultimate Reality may be experienced not only through religious practices but also through nature, art, human relationships, and service of others.

7. As long as the human condition is experienced as separate from Ultimate Reality, it is subject to ignorance and illusion, weakness and suffering.

8. Disciplined practice is essential to the spiritual life; yet spiritual attainment is not the result of one's own efforts, but the result of the experience of oneness with Ultimate Reality.

At the Annual Conference of May, 1986, we came up with additional points of agreement of a practical nature:

A. Some examples of disciplined practice, common to us all:

1. Practice of compassion
2. Service to others
3. Practicing moral precepts and virtues
4. Training in meditation techniques and regularity of practice
5. Attention to diet and exercise
6. Fasting and abstinence
7. The use of music and chanting and sacred symbols
8. Practice in awareness (recollection, mindfulness and living in the present moment)
9. Pilgrimage
10. Study of scriptural texts and scriptures

And in some traditions:

11. Relationship with a qualified teacher
12. Repetition of sacred words (mantra, japa)
13. Observing periods of silence and solitude
14. Movement and dance
15. Formative community

B. It is essential to extend our formal practice of awareness into all the aspects of our life.

C. Humility, gratitude, and a sense of humor are indispensable in the spiritual life.

D. Prayer is communion with Ultimate Reality, whether it is regarded as personal, impersonal, or beyond them both.

We were surprised and delighted to find so many points of similarity and convergence in our respective paths. Like most people of our time, we originally expected that we would find practically nothing in common. In the years that followed we spontaneously and somewhat hesitatingly began to take a closer look at certain points of disagreement until these became our main focus of attention. We found that discussing our points of disagreement increased the bonding of the group even more than discovering our points of agreement. We became more honest in stating frankly what we believed and why, without at the same time making any effort to convince others of our own position. We simply presented our understanding as a gift to the group.

Michelle Boyd

Building bridges through dialogue.

In Praise of Dawn

LISA McDONOUGH

Please send the story of your own "transforming experience" to the Editor, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542. You need not be a professional writer.

Whenever I grow low on hope, I remember the dawn. Every twenty-four hours, the earth offers a silent prayer of renewal, radiating beauty and joy around the world. Across the sky comes the light, like a curtain lifting up after the dark velvet night, billowing and breezily announcing a new day. It is the divine hello.

Nearly every ancient civilization had some way of praising and honoring this daily miracle of daybreak. The Greeks saw this moment of sunrise as a living Goddess and named her Aurora. Thomas Moore in his book *Meditation: On the Monk Who Dwells in Daily Life* refers to the traditional Christian prayer of Matins as "the morning prayers of the monastery, named after Matuta, Goddess of Dawn, according to Lucretius."

I too, find there is something intensely holy in these early hours, something still and present in the air. Mozart preferred to write his symphonies in the early morning, and it is in the pre-dawn that I often feel the creative presence of God ringing like a deep bell in my heart. The quiet, the peace, the earthiness, the art show of colors and tones changing robes from dark to light never loses its silent magic. I feel renewed getting up early to pray, to be part of this majestic experience, to simply be alive as the day comes to life too.

Ironically, this inspiration that dawn is a profound prayer in itself—no words or rituals needed—came not at a time of inner fullness or contentment, but at one of the most difficult times in my life. I was utterly empty. A relationship had ended, I was unable to have children, was frequently hospitalized with medical problems and could no longer work. I found I was staying up late alone into the night, writing bad poetry, and often crying. Surprised and embarrassed at feeling so profoundly lost, I was baffled and despondent about everything—past,

A freelance writer residing in Lake Park, Florida, Lisa McDonough is the author of the highly praised article, "The Un-naming of God," which appeared in Fellowship in Prayer *last year.*

present and future. I was deep into the dark night of the soul, my ego asking and trying to bargain with God for quick answers and a new direction to take in my life. What I thought I needed was a return to control and personal power, yet the boon I was being given was the courage to yield and just trust the truth.

I look back at this process as "rosy fingered dawn" caressing my soul, opening it to new possibilities. The most wonderful thing that I discovered during this time was that there is always another dawn, literally. No matter how grim life seemed at night, there was a fresh start every day, a blank page in creation, a canvas waiting for scenery

Lisa McDonough

and colors. Gradually my routine changed, I began to fall asleep early at night, and somehow my inner clock automatically woke me up before dawn. I watched many a morning unfold, and the stillness and peace began to seep into my soul, and into my days.

Sunrise became both a symbolic and a literal prayer in my life. When I ran out of words and had no energy for meditations, the dawn itself was my meditation. It wordlessly taught me to let go. I would just sit and be with it, watch it, feel it, fall into it, thank it. It began to heal me with its hope, and began to lift me up with its beauty. At a time I felt I could trust nothing, I discovered I could trust the dawn. It would be there, it was always ready for me, it continued to teach me surrender into grace.

I also began to notice that nature constantly changes shape, and glories in every change. Slowly I started to think of my own life as a changing canvas with new scenery and colors to add. Although I did not adjust easily or overnight to the losses and gifts in my life, eventually I saw that nothing stayed the same in nature, and this was okay—if not a call to celebration! Since that time of crisis and opportunity, my life has healed tremendously, and yet I still watch the dawn whenever I feel its gentle call.

I believe there are many other "earth prayers" going on right outside our windows, all over the planet, like a never-ending silent chant. The rosary beads of rain, *kyrie eleison* of thunderstorms, the mandala of snowflakes, the whirling dervish of wind, the hymn of the oceans, the prayer wheel of the seasons. Each moment the earth itself is in full prayer, sending forth its goodwill and loving intention for all living things. All around the world, each compassionate and savage moment is a note across the galaxy, a song, a wild hymnal of praise from and to creation.

I've also noticed that everyone seems to have a favorite time of day, a favorite season, or part of nature. My mother loves cloud-watching, my boyfriend loves the rumble and flash of thunderstorms. One brother turns to the seashore for peace and tranquility, a friend prefers the mountains. I've begun to think that whatever this personal favorite place and time may be, perhaps it is God praying alongside with us, asking us to watch and listen, calling us to pray through the earth's wonders. This sacred space can be just as much of our own personal planetary prayer as anything formal or cultural. We can enfold it into our hearts and souls, and draw upon its strength and presence whenever we need, wherever we go.

Peter G. Haskell

For me, the dawn still remains my favorite universal silent prayer, the constant affirmation of darkness coming into light, the gentle renewal, the promise of new life, and an expression of full faith that our good God is indeed here, with us, every step of the way.

There is always another dawn.

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Battling Cancer with Prayer

JOHN AND JEAN PILCH

Resurrection faith helps a couple to cope with life-threatening illness.

The diagnosis was like a bolt from the blue. Possible ovarian cancer. Symptoms which began to emerge in February (none of which were one of the "seven signs of cancer"), led to surgery in March followed by chemotherapy from April to August.

First you go numb from shock. It's incredible. You feel fine. Your biggest concern is weight gain not weight loss! The problem is the "E" words: eating too much, not exercising enough. This must be another "E" word: error! The surgeon knew there was a growth but would not know whether or not it was malignant until he looked inside. We'll just wait and pray.

In our faith tradition, there is a sacrament for this life-experience: anointing of the sick. Our pastor anointed Jean after Sunday Mass at the parish, the day before the scheduled surgery. He is truly God's gift to the parish and to us. His prayers are always positive, uplifting, and comforting.

The surgeon removed all the cancer he could find. Afterwards, other ministers came to visit and to pray with us in the hospital. This, too, helped immensely in these first few difficult days.

Jean's co-workers at Maryland New Directions, Inc., a career-counseling agency, sent wishes, gifts, positive sentiments and prayerful remembrances. Relatives and friends did the same.

John's scholar-friends from around the world posted good wishes and assurances of prayer for Jean and him on his Internet account. His colleagues at the University inquired daily about Jean's progress.

Of course, we, too, prayed. Jean's surgery took place on Monday of Holy Week, sometimes called Passion week. We have always attended all the special church services of this week which remembers the days of Jesus' passion and death. This week it was our turn to share more deeply in that mystery.

I will never forget my first visit with Jean in post-operative care, half an hour after she emerged from surgery. Still sedated, she was able to answer me.

The Pilch's live in Catonsville, MD. Jean Peters Pilch is a conference coordinator with Maryland New Directions, Inc. Dr. John J. Pilch teaches Bible at Georgetown University (Washington, DC).

"Jean, I love you."

"I love you too" was her immediate and whispered response.

"How do you feel?"

"It hurts."

She repeated this more than once. I have never had such a heart-wrenching and helpless feeling in my entire life. All I could do was press her hand and kiss her forehead. And pray. "Please God, take care of Jean. Please God, be with her. Please God, heal Jean."

Jean was released from the hospital on Holy Saturday, five days after surgery. It was the first time we would miss the Easter Vigil services on this special feast.

I have never had such a heart-wrenching and helpless feeling in my entire life.

On Easter Sunday, I went to Church and brought back home with me a small plastic bottle of water, scented with rose water, and blessed at the Easter Vigil. We keep it at the dining room table, and each morning at breakfast Jean signs her forehead with this water. "May the Risen Lord bring new life in this battle against cancer."

Jean works in a loving and caring community that has accompanied and strengthened her in the battle with life-threatening disease. "Thank you, God, for this job and these supportive friends."

Cancer in a spouse affects the partner as well. I managed to focus intense care on her and look after my obligations, too. During nights of fitful sleep, I would see the image of her saying: "It hurts," and pray: "Please God, be with Jean." Even when she would be in the hospital for chemotherapy treatments, and I'd waken and realize the other side of the bed was empty, I'd repeat: "Please God, be with Jean. Help Jean. Thank you, God."

Recently, we heard an answer to our prayers: "Remission!" With the psalmist we believe that "surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life" (Psalm 23:6). So, too, will blood tests and cat scans. Still we pray: "Thank you, God. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you for our relatives and friends and all who have supported us with prayer."

GOD IN ALL WORLDS: AN ANTHOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUAL WRITING,

edited by Lucinda Vardey, Pantheon Books, New York, 1995, 877 pages, hard cover, $35.00.

As a highly successful business woman in middle age, the editor of this inspiring anthology of contemporary spiritual writing found herself in a very dark wood, indeed. The endless pressures and demands of her career and the lack of any inner peace, joy, or time for herself resulted in a deepening depression, illness and, finally, surgery.

Her illness, however, she tells us in her introduction, turned out to be a transforming gift. It lead her back to prayer and meditation, and the knowledge that to live in spiritual truth requires a deep commitment to the divine in ourselves and others. "Through prayer," she says,"I found my lost soul."

Brought up as a practicing Catholic, Lucinda Vardey now entered on a spiritual quest that led her to explore Yogic practices, Buddhist meditation, and a variety of Eastern ways of liberation.

As a result she soon found that while she wished to remain a Christian, she could not go forward on her spiritual journey without the wisdom and insights of those disciplines.

The anthology, which reflects this intense spiritual exploration, spans the last fifty years and represents the most inspiring, consoling, and enlightening teachings she has learned from a broad spectrum of faith traditions, including Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and goddess worship.

More than one hundred writers are gathered here, including not only the great religious thinkers of our time (Krishnamurti; Martin Buber; H. H., the Dalai Lama; Hans Kung; and Sri Aurobindo), but also poets (Allen Ginsberg and Philip Larkin), novelists (Graham Greene and Aldous Huxley), activists (Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, and Vaclav Havel), psychologists (Abraham H. Maslow and M. Scott Peck), feminists (Germaine Greer and Rosemary Radford Ruether), artists (Martha Graham), naturalists (Barry Lopez and David Quammen), and physicists (Fritjof Capra and Albert Einstein).

This book deserves a permanent place in your collection of spiritual writings. You will return to it again and again as you proceed on your own spiritual journey. *PW*

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We welcome articles on prayer, meditation, spiritual experience, religious faith or practices, and similar topics. Preference is given to experiential manuscripts. Manuscripts should not exceed 1500 words, should be typed, double spaced, on 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper, on a 5 1/4 inch floppy minidisk, 2S/2D, or 2S/HD, or on 3 1/2 HD microdisks, in WordPerfect and sent to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542-3327. Please include a brief biography.

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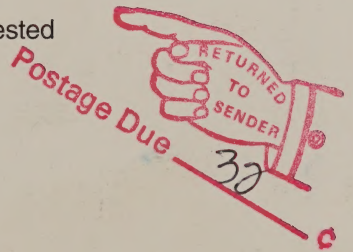

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